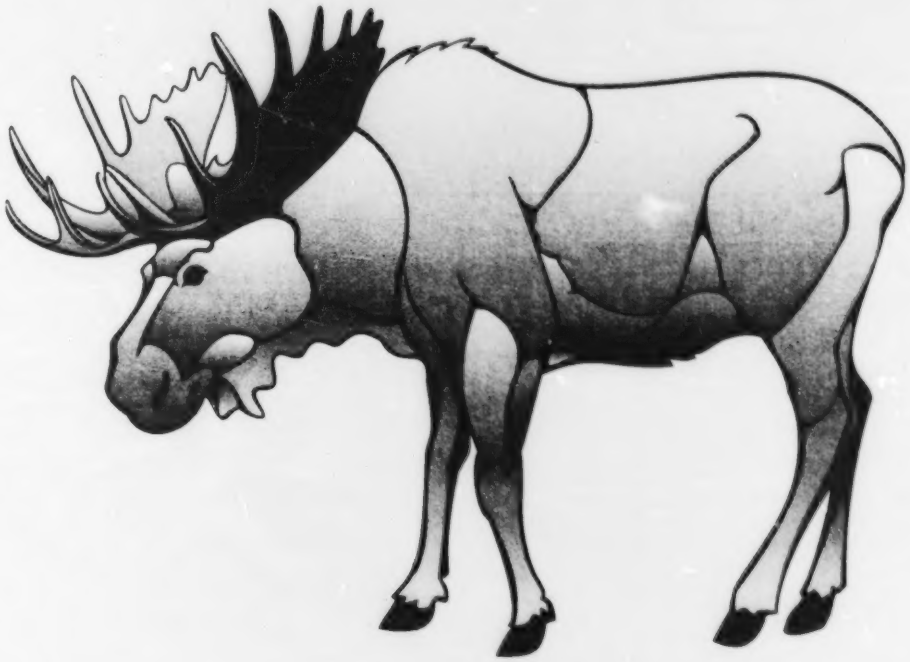
A Report for the Minister of

Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management

on Enhancing Outfitting Opportunities

in Northern Saskatchewan



Submitted by

Northern Outfitting Review Committee

October, 2001

Letter of Transmittal:

On behalf of the Northern Outfitting Review Committee, we are pleased to submit this report for review and consideration by government.

Through the course of the Committee's work consulting with a variety of people living and working in northern Saskatchewan, a number of issues were identified and potential solutions developed to deal with them. In most cases, neither the issues nor the solutions are easy. But it is important to know that there **are** issues, and that there **are** solutions to deal with them.

We want to thank Honourable Buckley Belanger, the Minister of Environment and Resource Management, for having the foresight to establish a public review committee to assist in this process. We appreciated the opportunity to work with communities and with government to find solutions that are both practical and appropriate. We look forward to seeing the results of this work put into action in the months and years to come.

Ray McKay, Co-chairperson
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La Ronge

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Northern Outfitting Review Committee Members:

Edward Benoanie, Wollaston Lake
Gary Carriere, Cumberland House
Don Deranger, Fond du Lac and Prince Albert
Skipper Pedersen, Buffalo Narrows

Donna Carlson-O'Keefe, Southend
Teddy Clark, La Loche
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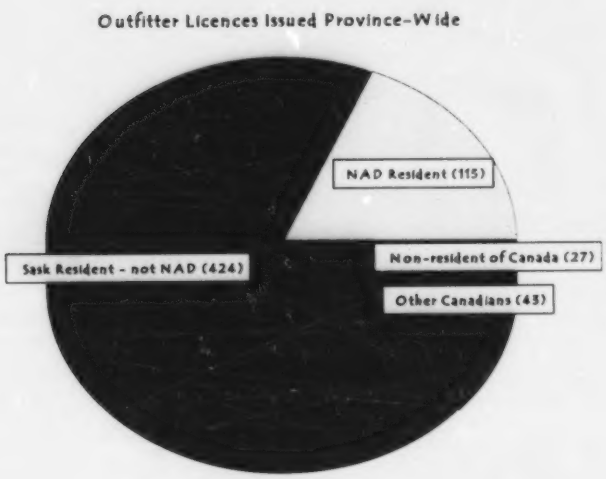
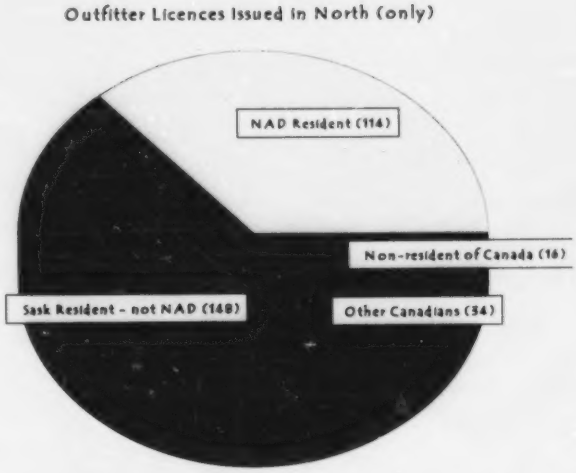
Background:

From time to time, Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management (SERM) has received comments and complaints about an apparent inequity in the number of northern outfitting businesses owned and operated by year-round residents of northern Saskatchewan.

When reviewing the number of outfitter licences issued by SERM in 2000, with a focus on those held by northern residents, these concerns seemed to be supported:


Outfitter Licences Issued Province-Wide
NAD Resident (115)
Non-resident of Canada (27)
Sask Resident - not NAD (424)
Other Canadians (43)


Outfitter Licences Issued in North (only)
NAD Resident (114)
Non-resident of Canada (16)
Sask Resident - not NAD (148)
Other Canadians (54)

To gain a more complete understanding of this situation, the Minister of SERM requested a review and analysis of the underlying reasons that may be contributing to this under-representation of northern resident owners. As well, the review was to include information and recommendations about actions that government could undertake that would improve opportunities for northern residents. This resulted in the establishment of a nine-person, independent committee to advise the Minister on these issues.

Demographics of Northern Saskatchewan:

When considering the need to deal with the issue of ownership of northern outfitting businesses, it is important to consider some of the current demographic realities in northern Saskatchewan. According to Saskatchewan Health statistics as of June 2000, 35,016 people reside in the northern half of Saskatchewan, representing about 3% of the provincial population. About two-thirds of the population live in 35 small municipal communities and one-third live in the reserve communities of 12 First Nations. In contrast to the rest of the province, the population in the north is young (45% under age 20) and growing (25% growth since the early 1980s). Aboriginal people form 81% of the population in northern Saskatchewan compared to 11% provincially and 3% nationally (Census 1996).

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Geographic isolation and few economic opportunities in the region have contributed to poverty, unemployment and low educational attainment. Many northern families manage on low incomes or incomes below the poverty line. Almost one-third of adults have less than a grade 9 education, thereby lacking the minimum education to gain employment. The majority of employment that is available for both males and females is part-time or seasonal work where earnings are significantly less than average provincial incomes. Many northern communities lack the infrastructure to create jobs for their citizens. About 45% of adults have dropped out of the labour force and the remaining 55% who are working or looking for work face unemployment rates 3 times the provincial average (20% unemployment compared to 7% provincially).

Northern lifestyles are slowly improving as residents increase their education levels and as the northern economy continues to create opportunities for employment. In the past five years, the number of people receiving provincial social assistance has declined by 31%. More schools are offering high school programs and young people are staying in school longer. The education gap between northern adults and provincial averages is shrinking. The northern economy is growing along with the growing labour force and industries have been able to absorb new entrants into employment. Increasingly, northern residents are gaining the jobs in their region.

Tourism Saskatchewan and the Canadian Tourism Commission identify two emerging trends that offer greater opportunities in northern Saskatchewan: Aboriginal tourism ventures and adventure tourism. A study published in 2000 by the Northern Tourism Task Team projected that the forests, wildlife, lakes and rivers will continue to be the main draw for tourists to the north. If northern residents can be positioned to participate in activities supported by these resources, either as owners of businesses or as employees working with existing business owners, the situation as described for northern Saskatchewan can only improve.

Northern Outfitting Review Committee:

In May, 2001, the Northern Outfitting Review Committee was established to advise the Minister of SERM about ways to enhance opportunities in the outfitting industry for residents of northern Saskatchewan. The committee was comprised of members of the public who were selected because of their interests, experience and expertise. Committee membership included active outfitters, business persons, northern aboriginal residents, and at least one person who was interested in becoming a licensed outfitter.

The committee's objectives were threefold:

- to gain more information about the northern outfitting industry and the extent of opportunity for participation and ownership in the outfitting industry by residents of northern Saskatchewan;
- to obtain stakeholder and public input to identify potential solutions to any problems or barriers that may be identified; and
- to make recommendations to the Minister of SERM regarding approaches and processes for government to consider.

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Process:

Armed with information about the current status of outfitting in Saskatchewan, including factors that may impact final recommendations, the committee sought public assistance and input. A series of meetings were held in nine communities in July, August and September, 2001. Meetings were held in Beauval, La Loche, Southend, Wollaston Lake, Fond du Lac, Creighton, Cumberland House, La Ronge and Buffalo Narrows. In addition, the committee held separate meetings or received presentations from the Athabasca Land Use Plan Steering Committee, the Ecotourism Society of Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation and the Saskatchewan Outfitters Association.

At every meeting, the committee posed the following questions to stimulate discussion:

How many of you would like to be owners or partners in outfitting lodges or businesses?

- Are you currently employed by an outfitter (as a guide or support person)?
- Have you thought about buying into this business as a partner or owner?
- Do you feel you have enough knowledge about an outfitting business to become a partner or owner?
- Are you currently an outfitter? Do you have pointers for others to consider that would help them to also become involved as owner/operators?

Are there particular reasons why you have not pursued purchase of a camp, either as a partner or owner? Do any of the following items apply for why you have not yet become involved?

- Need more training as a business owner
- Not sure of how/where to obtain financial backing
- Don't know about potential sales until someone else has bought the business
- Other reasons?

Are there things that government could do to help you to buy into an outfitting business, either as a partner or owner? Which of the following items might apply?

- Offer business training courses through technical schools (like SIAST) or in local communities
- Provide business development loans or loan guarantees
- Make sure businesses are advertised for sale in local communities, at band offices, etc.
- Are you currently an outfitter? Do you have pointers for government to consider that would help more people to also become involved as owner/operators?
- Other actions?

Constraints:

In its discussions and in forming recommendations for government's consideration, the committee had to work within the context of a number of constraining factors. These constraints challenged the committee to look beyond the obvious solutions of restricting camp ownership to northerners or simply issuing new outfitting licences as ways to increase local participation. Two constraining factors played a significant role in shaping committee recommendations:

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1. The angling and big game outfitting industry in Saskatchewan has been active for 30+ years and has reached a full level of maturity. Almost all of the lakes, vacant Crown land, and available big game resource allocations are fully utilized by existing outfitting businesses and/or commercial fishermen, in the case of lakes.

2. The North American Free Trade Agreement and the Agreement on Internal Trade together offer significant limitations on the province's ability to restrict ownership or allocate business opportunities to Saskatchewan residents.

Issues and Recommendations:

The issues and recommendations presented here were developed through information gathered at the public meetings and through the knowledge and experience of committee members themselves. They are presented as being of equal importance - all of the recommendations should receive full consideration by government.

1. Issue - Resources are Fully Allocated

One of the most common recurring issues heard at all of the meetings related to the lack of resources available to allow for new entrants into outfitting businesses.

Background:

The majority of the available fish and wildlife resources have already been allocated for use by aboriginal and treaty rights users, recreational users, commercial fishermen and existing outfitting businesses. Additional allocations cannot be granted if those would jeopardize the health and sustainability of fish and wildlife populations. Scientific information and data on the health of fish and wildlife resources needs to be as accurate as possible. Identifying options and opportunities for "re-allocating" some of the existing resource uses to make room for new outfitting opportunities (like cultural tourism outfitting) or the expansion of existing outfitters was identified as an important and key issue.

1.1 Recommendation:

Established outfitter licensees should be required to demonstrate ongoing use of all of their resource allocations or lose the portions they are not utilizing. For example, if an outfitter is endorsed for bear and white-tailed deer, but is not actively using the bear allocation over a set time period (two or three years), it should be removed from his/her licence. Also, if an outfitter is allocated 25 white-tailed deer tags, and over a three-year averaging period, consistently uses only 20 of them, the additional 5 should be relinquished and made available for re-allocation to someone else. In cases where outfitters are "managing" their allocations by restricting clients from using a lake or accessing an area within their allocated operating area, these outfitters should be required to submit a plan outlining their contemplated use. Any area or allocation that is not used, and not planned to be used, for a three-year period, should be relinquished.

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1.2 Recommendation:

Outfitters should further be encouraged to "use it or lose it" through a changed licensing fee structure. A "progressive" fee structure should be developed so that the greater the allocation, the more lakes to be accessed or the greater the number of angler days of use per lake, the more the outfitter pays. This kind of fee structure would be more reflective of the value the outfitter is deriving from access to those resources, as well as encouraging the outfitter to be realistic in the size of the area or allocation he/she is prepared to hold.

1.3 Recommendation:

Outfitters should be required to pay their resource allocation licence fees for deer and bear in advance, ideally at the time of licence renewal, in order to hold them. Currently, an outfitter may be allocated 30 white-tailed deer tags and is able to pay the resource allocation licence fees one at a time, if he so chooses, throughout the hunting season. If the outfitter ultimately only uses 20 of the tags, that is all he is required to pay for, yet no other outfitter can be given access to the 10 licences that were not utilized. If an outfitter wishes to hold all 30 allocations, he should be required to pay the full fee up front. This way, if the outfitter determines that he really only needs 20 of the tags, the remaining allocation could be made available for others to access. Over a three-year averaging period, if the outfitter consistently does not utilize his full allocation, he would relinquish the excess tags which could then be permanently re-allocated to another user.

1.4 Recommendation:

Moose licences must be allocated in a different manner than currently used. The number of available moose tags should be equally divided amongst the licensed outfitters with a minimum guarantee for each licensee (perhaps three or four tags per camp). If some of the moose licences are not going to be used by that camp (i.e. they do not have clients booked/ committed) by May 1st each year, the unused licences should be relinquished for that year only and made available to other licensed outfitters in the zone on a "draw" basis. At this time, the outfitter that will be using the tags would also be required to pay the applicable resource allocation licence fee. Having the remainder of the tags available to others on a draw basis would eliminate the need for outfitters to wait in line at the SERM Ecoregion office for access to a limited number of tags.

1.5 Recommendation:

Non-resident moose season dates should be adjusted. Non-resident moose seasons in the northwest portion of the province, especially WMZ 72 and 73, are too early to allow for good hunting opportunities. To better coincide with the rut, it is recommended that these seasons be started one week later than is presently the case.

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1.6 Recommendation:

Wildlife Management Zones should be further "zoned" for issuance of moose tags. Moose tags are currently issued and valid within a full Wildlife Management Zone (WMZ) with harvest taking place anywhere within that WMZ. It is recommended that the WMZ should be further "zoned" so that moose harvest is more widely dispersed throughout the entire area and there is less risk of over-harvest in one location. Zoning to manage the harvest should also accommodate the increased recommended allocation of three or four moose tags per outfitter.

1.7 Recommendation:

Resource users who already have access to allocations should be encouraged to convert their allocation to a sport or outfitting use (including cultural tourism). This would include trappers and commercial fishermen. The benefits of converting allocations for these types of uses to a more economically attractive use like outfitting should be promoted through an education or information program. Conversion of existing resource uses would allow for "re-allocation" of the resource to outfitting, which has a much higher financial return than some of the existing uses. Resource users need to be made aware of these opportunities, and government needs to remove some of the restrictions that would prevent re-allocation to a sport or outfitting use.

1.8 Recommendation:

It is recommended that more lakes be converted to "catch and release" only. This would result in decreased resource consumption by existing users and may free up some of the resource to be re-allocated to a greater number of outfitters. As well, the use of barbless hooks should be made mandatory to ensure a smaller number of fish are inadvertently killed by those practicing catch and release.

1.9 Recommendation:

Fishing seasons in the central management zone should be opened earlier to coincide with the start of the spring bear hunting season. Non-resident bear hunters coming into Saskatchewan would be able to participate in a greater variety of outdoor activities if fishing seasons were open to them. This may provide greater incentive for non-resident bear hunters to visit Saskatchewan.

2. Issue: Cultural Tourism Licensing

At almost all of the meetings, people suggested developing new opportunities associated with the concept of "cultural tourism".

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Background:

Cultural tourism is generally defined as tourism or adventure travel directly connected to activities associated with the northern lifestyle, and in particular, with aboriginal cultural heritage. It was noted that there is a potential client demand for activities such as dog sledding, working a trapline, netting and drying fish, and assisting with hunting small game (rabbits, etc.). There were also suggestions that clients may be interested in observing a traditional caribou hunt, although this did meet with some resistence from aboriginal elders who attended the meeting in Wollaston Lake. As a new opportunity for local northerners to become involved in outdoor adventure businesses, development of cultural tourism was identified as a key issue.

2.1 Recommendation:

Government must identify and remove regulatory restrictions preventing cultural tourism by northern residents. To be viable, client guests must be able to accompany the licensee in pursuing traditional activities like trapping, fishing, and hunting of small game and perhaps caribou hunting. It is not necessary that the client be able to hunt or net fish, only to be able to share in the experience. This must however, include client consumption of the fish or meat taken through these activities. As well, cultural tourism needs to be included in the list of activities that are acceptable for use of Traditional Resource Use (TRU) cabins.

2.2 Recommendation:

A new license category should be developed that recognizes the limited consumption of resources taken through cultural tourism activities. Licences could then be offered in areas that would not now sustain full consumptive outfitting activities but could support the level of use anticipated through cultural tourism activities.

2.3 Recommendation:

An education or awareness program should be developed and directed at local northern communities and First Nations people to ensure there is improved understanding about cultural tourism activities. For example, the resistance from elders towards use of caribou by non-aboriginal clients may simply be a reaction based on a lack of understanding about the role of the participant (i.e. clients would not be hunting and keeping the meat from the animal).

3. Issue: Relocate SERM Office and Increase Aboriginal Staffing

The location of the Meadow Lake Ecoregion office is not generally felt to be the most appropriate location to service the residents of northwest Saskatchewan. As well, the number of Aboriginal staff employed by SERM could be higher.

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Background:

Northern Saskatchewan is served by SERM's Shield and West Boreal Ecoregions. The headquarter's office for Shield Ecoregion is located in La Ronge which is viewed as being a "northern" location. However, some debate exists as to whether or not the West Boreal Ecoregion headquarters in Meadow Lake are well placed to serve the northwest region. Additionally, northern residents feel a stronger relationship with SERM could be developed if a greater number of positions, at all levels in the department, were held by Aboriginal people. When resource allocation decisions are made within the department, it would allow for greater understanding and acceptance if the rationale leading to that decision could be explained in Cree or Dene (as applicable) to local residents.

3.1 Recommendation:

Consideration should be given to having the SERM Ecoregion office at Meadow Lake relocated further north. Having the headquarters located more centrally within the West Boreal Ecoregion would allow for greater interaction with community residents and resource users throughout the Ecoregion.

3.2 Recommendation:

Greater efforts should be given to hiring Aboriginal (especially northern) people to fill key positions in SERM. While it is recognized that SERM does hire a number of Aboriginal people, it is noted that usually these are not in management positions. To be more effective at developing increased understanding at the local level, more staff in positions with decision-making authority should be Aboriginal.

4. Issue: Access to Maps and Resource Allocation Information

Potential new outfitters do not have access to good information about areas and resource allocations that may be available.

Background:

Currently, maps and information about species allocations are only readily available in SERM's Ecoregion offices (headquarters for each region). Sometimes, allocation errors are made because this information is not easily accessible or up to date in satellite department offices. The limited access to this information was identified as an issue at several of the public meetings, particularly those held on the west side of the province.

4.1 Recommendation:

SERM should develop an automated mapping system to record the boundaries of Wildlife Management Zones, Allocated Operating Areas, and other relevant resource use information. This information should be available and readily accessible for public and staff review in each of SERM's community offices.

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5. Issue: Outfitting Businesses Not Hiring Local Residents

One of the first issues to be identified by participants in community meetings at Fond du Lac and Wollaston Lake was that existing outfitters and camp owners do not hire significant numbers of local workers.

Background:

A few of the lodges do hire northerners to work as guides, particularly the fishing camps, however, some camps bring almost all of their guides in from southern communities for the summer season. As well, the majority of other camp workers - like cooks, cleaning staff and dock workers - are usually not predominantly local residents. Oftentimes, new owners purchasing existing businesses may not continue with local hiring because they are unaware of the importance to local residents. As a mechanism for local people to gain valuable experience that may one day enable them to acquire and operate a business themselves, encouraging local hiring was identified as a key issue.

5.1 Recommendation:

Government must work with northern outfitter operators and communities to encourage the hiring of local workers, including high school students for summer employment. Advertisements for jobs at camps should be placed in local community newspapers and bulletin boards and interviews should be held in the local communities closest to the outfitting camp's location.

5.2 Recommendation:

As a condition of their outfitting licence, lodge owners should be required to give their best efforts to maximize local employment. Outfitters should further be required to report annually on their employment statistics and efforts undertaken to ensure local people are given fair opportunities to secure camp positions.

5.3 Recommendation:

Mentoring (apprentice) programs should be developed, including sponsorship or cost-sharing of the salary of the person being mentored. Outfitters should be encouraged to participate as a way of helping local people obtain relevant training/experience under the guidance of an established operator. Emphasis should be directed to including young people in mentoring programs. Mentoring could also help potential new outfitters to buy and operate businesses in the future.

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5.4 Recommendation:

The provincial government should work with the federal government to review employment insurance eligibility requirements for guides and other camp staff to better recognize the seasonal nature of the work. Potential local employees are sometimes reluctant to take camp positions because of the short-term nature of the work being insufficient to qualify for employment insurance benefits once the season is complete.

6. Issue: Outfitter Training Programs

A lack of directly related training for outfitting business owners and supporting workers was identified as an issue.

Background:

Currently, there are no training programs available in Saskatchewan that are directly related to skill development and knowledge required to own and operate a successful outfitting business, although there is a generic small business owners' program offered by the Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council (STEC). There are also guide certification programs offered by STEC which include a 4-6 week training program regularly offered through the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) campus in Prince Albert or on-site in any location where at least 15 people want to participate in the training.

6.1 Recommendation:

Government should work with the Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council and the Saskatchewan Outfitters Association to develop an outfitter-specific training program (or enhance existing programs) and make it readily available and accessible for prospective or current outfitting business owners. Small business or tourism business training programs are already available. Developing and adding a module specific to outfitting businesses would enhance existing programs at relatively little cost to government or others.

6.2 Recommendation:

Government should work with the Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council to promote the availability of guide training programs and training programs for other workers (cooks, cleaning staff, etc.) already developed and offered by that agency. It may simply be a lack of knowledge about what is already available in Saskatchewan that prevents people from participating and obtaining training and certification.

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7. Issue: Role of Co-management and Land Use Management Boards

In many parts of the province, co-management boards and land use management boards are not in place and communities do not have a forum to provide advice and input to resource management decisions.

Background:

Decisions about resource use and access are the responsibility of the Minister of SERM, usually based on recommendations and advice received from department staff. In some parts of the province, co-management boards and land use management boards have been established and may provide some input into resource management decisions. Many locations however, do not have co-management or land use management boards in place. Traditional resource use and knowledge is not always considered along with other information when making resource allocation decisions. Not being part of the process and a lack of opportunity to influence resource management decisions were identified as important issues in several community meetings.

7.1 Recommendation:

Where co-management boards and land use management boards already exist, SERM should consult with the boards when considering new allocations or re-allocation of lands and resources. The department should also be encouraged to establish more co-management boards involving local community and stakeholder interest groups in locations where they are not currently in place. Local, traditional resource users should be encouraged to be part of these discussions. Providing an opportunity for local northern residents to be informed, understand, and provide recommendations on resource management use in their areas, would result in greater acceptance of the decisions ultimately rendered by the Minister.

8. Issue: Local Advertising of Business Sales

Often, local community residents are unaware of the potential sale of an outfitting business in their area until after the sale is complete.

Background:

There are currently some requirements for outfitters wishing to sell to advertise the sale for a short time period in the local community. However, these requirements do not seem to be universal throughout the north, and the time period is sometimes only a week or two. This was identified as an issue since it requires significantly more time than this for a potential local purchaser to obtain financing and be able to negotiate a suitable purchase arrangement.

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8.1 Recommendation:

Outfitting businesses should be required to advertise their availability for sale in the local communities for a three-month period. This would allow sufficient opportunity for local residents to be informed and to secure financing for a potential purchase.

8.2 Recommendation:

Outfitters who sell their business should be prevented from acquiring a new resource allocation and outfitting licence from SERM for the same species for a period of three years after sale. This would prevent an outfitter from profiting through repeated sales of resource allocations that are the rightful property of the Crown.

8.3 Recommendation:

Partnerships and joint ventures should be emphasized and encouraged by government, perhaps through a formal information/awareness initiative. Partnerships and joint ventures may allow for a new purchaser to assume ownership of an outfitting business over time. This would be beneficial in at least two ways: (1) the new owner would have an opportunity to benefit from the knowledge and experience of the outgoing operator, and (2) it would reduce the need for large loans or financial support to be granted all at once - payments could be spread out over a two or three year period for example and some of the money could come from operating dollars gained from the business itself.

9. Issue: Difficulty Obtaining Financing

It is very difficult for potential business purchasers to receive equity financing from lending institutions.

Background:

In many cases, the individual would not have owned a business previously and does not have a significant portfolio of assets, and is therefore viewed by the traditional lending institutions as being "high risk". The seasonal nature of outfitting businesses, combined with remote camp locations, make it particularly difficult to obtain financing from lending institutions for these types of ventures. The lack of availability of financial support was identified as another key issue preventing northern residents from acquiring outfitting businesses.

9.1 Recommendation:

Government should develop and distribute information about the kinds of financial support programs that may already be available in terms of loan guarantees or grants to assist small business owners with start-up costs. Many potential business persons are not aware of financing programs and options that may already be available. Existing programs should be promoted more widely.

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9.2 Recommendation:

The Departments of Northern Affairs and Economic Development should be encouraged to develop grants and loan programs that could be available to potential new outfitters. It is recommended that potential outfitters be offered incentive programs similar to the loan program already offered to commercial fishermen.

Other Considerations:

Through the course of its work, the committee was made aware of a number of other concerns that are important to northern community residents. While these issues were considered to be outside of the mandate of the Northern Outfitting Review Committee, they should be brought to the attention of government, with further action encouraged by SERM or the appropriate department or agency, if possible.

1. A concern was expressed regarding the use of all terrain vehicles in the Cumberland House area. The committee was asked if current restrictions that limit the use of ATVs could be eliminated. Client satisfaction would improve, and the time an outfitter must spend placing each client could be reduced if outfitters could use ATVs to transport their clients to remote hunting locations, rather than being restricted to designated trails only.

2. Also at Cumberland House, residents urged the committee to request government to maintain higher water levels throughout the Cumberland Delta. The importance and ecological health of this unique freshwater marsh should not be overlooked. Water levels need to be kept at a level that sustains this fragile ecosystem, rather than allowing it to be altered due to unnatural periods of drought.

3. From residents of Uranium City, the committee was advised that the air strip in Uranium City was shortened a few years ago, likely due to maintenance needs and costs associated with a longer strip. As a result however, this air strip can no longer handle landings from larger planes which may be a limiting factor for outfitting businesses in the far north.

4. In Fond du Lac, some concerns were raised about the need for archaeological studies of historical sites to be completed before areas are developed for use. Sites of historical or cultural significance must be protected and maintained.

5. From meetings held on the west side of the province, several people expressed concern with tree harvesting practices. The general feeling was that tree harvesting near lakes and rivers should not be allowed to occur all the way to the water's edge.

6. It was noted that the wolf population is very high in northern Saskatchewan. Some people felt that a hunting season for wolves may not be acceptable, however, government should consider paying an additional bounty for wolves that are trapped.

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7. The committee was advised that government should be encouraged to complete a road connecting La Loche to Fort McMurray. This access would allow for more hunters and tourists to come into Saskatchewan which may help support local outfitting businesses.

8. Tourism committees should be established at several locations across the north. Ideally, these committees should be supported by offices of Tourism Saskatchewan located in northern communities. This kind of support would assist tourism adventure operators to develop and grow outfitting (and related) businesses, particularly if guidance and advice is provided locally.

Conclusion:

It is recognized that the issues and concerns brought to the attention of the Northern Outfitting Review Committee are tough issues to deal with. Some of the solutions presented in this report may be costly, and will challenge government to change its policies, practices and regulations. The one thing that government must not do is ignore them. Solutions - either those presented or some reasonable alternatives - need to be developed and implemented.

Elders and community residents expressed a growing frustration and anger with the current situation that seems to have resources and other northern benefits given over to outsiders. Traditional users feel that they are ignored, and certainly not part of decision making processes. Government needs to restore a sense of ownership over resources to the people who live and work in the north. And that means that the northern people must have a meaningful role in the management of those resources.

A good place to start is with greater support and involvement of northerners in outfitting businesses. We encourage SERM, and government as a whole, to act on the recommendations presented in this report. Progress made on each recommendation should be reported upon regularly. Consideration should be given to having members of the Northern Outfitting Review Committee receive periodic updates on an ongoing basis, a role which committee members are prepared to fulfill on behalf of the northern residents and individuals who expressed their concerns.